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DOI:

[10.1080/13528165.2018.1460440](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2018.1460440)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Read, A. (2018). Child & Co: In the Company of Your Own Making. *PERFORMANCE RESEARCH*, 23(1), 5-23. [1352-8165]. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2018.1460440>

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Child & Co: In the Company of Your Own Making

Alan Read

Those of us bound between these pages share something called childhood. We had one, or we are having one, childhood that is, the cursed privilege of experiencing dependency in our youth. Some of us have lived beyond childhood, others never left, and we of course share nothing, in that none of us know what might have constituted that childhood for another and often cannot recall our own. For some the remarkable feature of the human animal, the extension of its infancy and dependent childhood way beyond the duration of other mammals, might well be a shared experience, for you, an isolating condemnation of your own abandonment. There can be no presumptions. As Adam Phillips once said: “what could be more traumatic, more wholly daunting than a happy childhood?”⁹

Image 1: Alan Read (1945, aged 29) & Image 2. Alan Read (1960, aged 5)

Photographers Unknown

Layout: Set these side by side

So in saying the word childhood, again, we would want immediately to recognize, critique and celebrate distinct differences as to what that experience might be. For those posthumous ones amongst us for instance, the few of us born after our father’s death (it is in all but war-time a rare circumstance), the ‘extension’ of childhood might have been experienced as something closer to a curtailment than continuity. In my instance while I shared a name with my father we shared little else other than anti-natal proximity. His premature demise, like but not like David Copperfield six-months before my birth in 1956, invited others (including, somewhat confusingly, multiple Catholic Fathers) to commit themselves to my care, something that I only ever thought of as a proliferation of paternity without the debts nor duties fatherhood might foster.

But there are very different forms of such curtailment of childhoods that should ghost everything that follows about futures. Such curtailments can be brutal and short and, perhaps inevitably, made the object of offshore humanism by ‘artists’ who are themselves morally lost at sea.

Image 3: Ai Weiwei 'as' (sic) Aylan Kurdi, 2016

Photographer Unknown

And they can be systematic and enduring, ubiquitous and ignored, the road-kill that thrills the subjects of JG Ballard's *Crash*, and appalls those for whom 'pleasure in risk' is a neo-liberal nicety presently unavailable to the already precarious for whom risk is a real and present threat.

Image 4: John Baldessari, *Crowd with the Reason of History Missing*, 1985.

Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

Let me say something about such catastrophes of childhood before launching too romantically into futurist faith. How about a scandal that statistically dwarfs those drownings, but will never make it to the network news? George Monbiot writing in *The Guardian* newspaper under the title: "A million road deaths every year? It's just the price of doing business",ⁱⁱ is not telling us anything new when he says: "Death and injury on the roads is the world's most neglected public health issue. Almost as many people die in road accidents – 1.2 million a year – as are killed by malaria or tuberculosis."ⁱⁱⁱ But his prognosis of how to *act* upon this matter of fact by turning it into a matter of concern is far from commonly expressed and requires some careful reorganisation of previously sundered objects to get started. Amongst these would be our object of attention here that I have given the name childhood. Like resituating the motor of history within the whited-out crowds with the reason of history missing, in John Baldessari's widely exhibited cut-outs of the 1980s, repositioning children, as Monbiot does, in their rightful place at the centre of the scene of auto-destruction, is a chilling example of what I will attempt later with the rather more utopian ends of research.

It is the poor who disproportionately get hurt in this vehicular scandal, 50 million are injured each year by cars, of which 85% are accidents that occur in what the IMF still calls 'developing countries'. And for someone like me who would appear to identify, if not necessarily celebrate, the human-defining quality of an extended childhood, it is moot that the vast majority of these accidents happen to children walking on roads. Auto-extinction will soon overtake malaria as the biggest killer of the young outside the

industrial west. While the current scientific understanding of a ‘nature’ of malaria and its impact on ‘society’ would appear to generate \$1.9billion of foreign aid (2015), the invisibility of road deaths in either nature or society generates an annual global road safety budget of just \$10m (2016).^{iv}

One would be surprised if an entity as powerful as the motor industry, which cuts so seamlessly across from the petrochemical extraction of nature to the road-widenings of society, were to take the lead in exposing these figures to some serious scrutiny. But those vested with responsibility to represent these hidden losses from the collective back to the collective of which they were once a part, the *Global Road Safety Partnership* for instance, or the ‘independent’ *Commission for Global Road Safety* would, according to Monbiot, be advised to reroute their analyses from the isolated hegemony of the car, to the far more fragile relationship *between* industrial vehicles and pedestrians, cyclists, ox carts and rickshaws, that are mixing badly and with tragic outcomes. If Deleuze and Guattari had been more thoughtful botanists of the asphalt (as Walter Benjamin encouraged us to be contra Heinrich Goebbels’ loose use of the material as metaphor) then this unholy interface between people, places and things, might have been accorded the category of the ‘rhizome of the road’, so transversal its ensemble of associations.

It would be such diversity of context and concern that would prompt me to write about, to, and with, *children* in every ‘possible’ sense, in their company you could say, as distinct to ‘*the* child’, in one sense, that of an entity removed from us, as though we were never one of those different ones. Never quite in *their* company, but simply making them customers of our own adult commerce. There is certainly ‘no future’ for that child, as it persists as a methodologically convenient abstraction for Lee Edelman and others in their sophisticated meditations on ‘reproductive futurism’. Have children not labored enough without doing the bidding of such theoretical reductionism on behalf of adults’ identitarian claims?’

I am not really interested in the child as ‘innocence in need of protection’, those children walking the highways are hardly innocent of petro-chemical corporations’ threats to their survival, but rather writing here about something much more plural, material, and manifestly messy I hope. I cannot know of course. An adult’s imagination

of a child's imagination, as Mick Taussig once put it in his writing on the public secret, cannot be but something of an adult fantasy.^{vi} Those of us bound together here once were, we more or less might still be, and, sometimes, we most definitely, despite 'inner-childing' are *not*, not children that is, and we should recognize when that difference is ethical and all-important. I am not at all sure Ai Weiwei has worked out *that* critical difference which enhances his work on occasions in its playfulness, and dreadfully debilitates his work on other occasions, as on the beached occasion above, and before us.

Image 5: New York, Halloween, Bronx. c.1949. Helen Levitt. Cover of *Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement: The Last Human Venue*. Alan Read, 2008.

I have written about children and their relationship to performance and live art for some years, at least since my work through the 1980s at Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop in the Docklands area of South East London, that engaged with a myriad of those for whom the patience of care had become the impatience of a forced, exiled maturity characteristic of those made most precarious in besieged communities literally 'losing ground' to the four big-banks.^{vii} This writing was always in defence and espousal of a 'politics of possibility' and against 'the politics of probability'.^{viii} You hardly need a theoretician incanting the banner headline 'No Future' to a working class child dispossessed of the protection of their public housing, tautology would come to mind amongst other sentiments. It is not as though they have never heard that exact refrain from others less theoretically nuanced, repossession bailiffs for instance, the monotonic 'repo men', as their families suffer the humiliating exclusions and expulsions of the neo-liberal economy.

Image 6: Bash Street Kids, *The Beano*, Leo Baxendale, 1956

Courtesy DC Thomson and Co Ltd

Against this pressing material reality, a politics of *possibility* is signified in my understanding by the following very physical, often peculiar things that children do so well: unruly assemblies, amateur collection, vocal protest, aggravating the illusions of 'so-called' artists, insurrectionary gestures, baroque insolence, spiteful sense, altruistic defence. Having grown up with Leo Baxendale's imperious cartoon-draughting work for *The Beano*, The Bash Street Kids, (first outed in 1956 the year of my birth), which

espoused a continuous politics of possibility against authoritarianism, I learnt more about these ‘possible politics’ in the schools in the vicinity of the Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop in the 1980s, where creativity in the curriculum was never going to be fetishized given the competing demands of survival, but neither was it derided nor diminished as, despite the best practice of insightful teachers, it increasingly is in the UK today.

This is how I observed it through that Thatcherite decade in my workshop-notebook, subsequently channelled through the prism of *potential*, Dave Hickey, who was, against the grain, always writing on beauty as a contestable means of self-identification:

The school-bell goes and children return to their classroom whose modernist, white-walled aesthetic is overlaid, overplayed by the exuberance of expression. As though a pantechmicon of powder paint has careered into this igloo of cool, Julian Schnabel meets Kasimir Malevich’s white period in a messy conflagration of cloudy vapours, these infants slough off their puritan heritage, the flat protestant grammar of modernity with their baroque flutings, rococo daubs, nouveau curves, pop incandescence, psychedelic swirls and graffiti tagging. Like other natural anti-academicians these children prioritize, as Dave Hickey describes it: “...complexity over simplicity, pattern over form, repetition over composition...curvilinear over rectilinear, and the fractal, the differential and the chaotic over Euclidian order. They celebrate the idea of space over the idea of volume. They are literally and figuratively “outside styles”. Decorative and demotic they resist institutional appropriation and always have.”^x The children I have shared space with, and observed, routinely confuse and confound the white wall of modernity, most famously pursued by Le Corbusier who wrote in his *The Decorative Art of Today* of 1925: “Whitewash is extremely moral. Suppose there were a decree requiring all rooms in Paris to be given a coat of whitewash. I maintain that that would be a police task of real stature and a manifestation of high morality, the sign of a great people”.^x

These same children mill around the ‘nature table’ hands reaching with the imperative of tactility to caress the shells, eggs, crabs, star-fish, sea urchin, sponge, nests, furs, feathers, barks, Pikachu (Mark I) with a glissandoing ball-bearing bottom. The zoologist and bio-semiotician, Adolf Portmann would not be surprised to find

touch, sight and smell at work here, *prior* to interpretation, children, as they tend to “...regarding much in the appearance of the higher animals as a ‘feast for the eye’...”.^{xi} They hold their prized possessions and finds above their heads in affecting display, animating their melancholy still lives, and the teacher has to remind them there is another question to be asked beyond the ubiquitous refrain: “How much do you love it?”

The rules of rational, educational orthodoxy protests against this artificiality of outward show, it demands essentials instead of facades and thinks that the very observation of natural objects should make us proof against false appearances and superficiality. But the perceiving eye of a child insists that the appearance that meets the eye *is* of significance and refuses to allow it to be degraded to a mere shell which hides the essential from our glance. Symmetry of course helps as an *aide memoire* here, but has little to do with ‘the beautiful’, for while only a few creatures are *assymetrical*, the sponges, the hermit crab and fiddler crab, and the mature plaice, whose eye shifts from one side of its body round the corner to the other, (where is the gaze of the plaice now?), a child will always be able to compare knowledgeably the *outside appearance of things* as compared to their *internal*/visceral arrangement. When Adolf Portmann suggested: “...what is presented to the eye is formed according to different laws from what is invisible”, some of us took him more literally than he might have imagined.^{xii}

Image 7: Deep Sea Angler Fish, Nature Table, Our Lady of Lourdes School, Southend-on-Sea, 1963

My own favourite, around 1962, was the Deep-Sea Angler-Fish. I insisted its melancholic carcass was given a prominent place on the nature table, against the repulsion of its abject form by those who struggled to satisfactorily categorise its discrete charms. The male animal grows on to the female at an early stage, most of its organs degenerate and finally it is included into the blood stream of the female. So in the end it forms only a peculiar kind of testis, which the female carries about with her for the rest of her life. Familiar. Now *these* I thought, without having come across Judith Butler given I was five, are bodies that ‘really matter’, worthy of a closer look for some spectacular ‘gender trouble’. Adult humans always seemed so slow in

catching on, and when they did they needed a theory to justify what was already rampant in our loose minds.

Why was that? In this classroom, on this day, the characteristics of a child's 'natural history' momentarily foreground 'rigorous amateurism', 'informed enthusiasm', pedestrianism, observation, collection, and identification, over the all too premature disinterested dissection and interpretation of the adult-inspired invasive life sciences. Here it is the practices of touch, feeling and movement that are at work on *surfaces*, that can, amongst children at least, before the School Inspectors have their Platonic way with 'the necessity of depth', happily remain surfaces.

This scrupulous attention to surface, often tactile, is something that children do better than most, and such care for the outward appearance against the fetishism of hidden hermeneutics was something I had always presumed live art might align itself with, even if it could not always quite do these things with the same strength. I say 'strength' because relative to most children, 'so called' artists have *power*; it is children that are so strong, yet remain so disempowered in all but the most privileged economic contexts (ones that in their ecological excess can afford the luxury of the sloughing off of species for the ornamentation of nature tables for instance).

That disempowerment (as distinct to weakness), for most children derives from a very adult capacity, what I would call the 'politics of *probability*'. This is a politics against which I write and act, a politics best explained by an economic system at the heart of which is the derivative and the hedge fund that bets against the future likelihood of economic movement of one kind or another, which happens to be a future of some 'interest' to those likely to live one day within such a future, children *now* looking forward to then when they will be further in debt. Whether we like it or not some of us, who by definition are the audience for reading the writing collected between these covers, or across illuminated floating pages, live in an age of moneytised future builders, so I have always taken it that the styles, rhetorics, manner and practices of *futures* are as much our responsibility as they are anyone else's, not least of all those corporate interests that hedge against their commercial right to sell us back a pale version of a future we thought was already our own rather brighter one. But when I say 'us' I am,

really meaning you, not me now not-child, but you, now-child, children in the company of your own making.^{xiii} Make of it what you will.

Child & Co

Image 8: Child & Co, Fleet Street, London 1559-2017, (2017) Photo Alan Read

Here is a picture I took of one kind of future-builder that has been busy building away for half a millennia. This is the oldest bank in the UK, Child & Co, still at Number 1 Fleet Street, London, where it has been since 1559, so, well before Shakespeare got around to ensuring all children had to take theatre seriously before they needed to. This is the model business for Charles Dickens' 'Tellson's Bank', in his revolutionary novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, where the 'inconvenience' of the bank, its congenital resistance to 'rebuilding', is likened to the 'Country', shadowed as it is by the vast Temple Bar and its spiked, executed heads that looked back blankly at the lives 'taken' by the bank in its necrophiliac workings. Tellson's (Child & Co) is, in Dickens' words, a bank of 'death': "very small, very dark, very ugly [...] A place of death, where the utterer of a bad note was put to death, the unlawful opener of a letter was put to death, the purloiner of forty shillings and sixpence was put to death".^{xiv}

The bank was figured by Dickens, before Anonymous, Occupy and others drew our attention to their excesses, as a 'killing-machine', and long before sub-prime, eviction, crash and expulsion, ensured those who were already precarious felt more so. Bodies and perceptions is what is at stake in this precarity of course.^{xv} Here the odd-job-man Cruncher, never allowed through the portal of the door but always on guard outside it, the 'live sign' of the house, an early embodiment of financialisation, would, when errands necessitated his absence, be replaced by his twelve year old son, who was his 'express image'. Like father like child-son, interchangeable as with many of Dickens' adulterised laboring children. It was via this guarded portal that a child would enter Child & Co as an aspirant apprentice, and as Dickens described it: "They hid him until he was old. They kept him in a dark place, like a cheese, until he had the full Tellson flavor and blue-mould upon him. Then *only was he permitted to be seen, spectacularly*, poring over large books, and casting his breeches and gaiters into the general weight of the establishment."^{xvi}

So, against the pressing and omnipresent ‘general weight of the establishment’, I am, with others in this journal, critically concerned with who is ‘permitted to be seen’, spectacularly if need be, and under what conditions? That ‘permitted to be seen’ might otherwise be described as, ‘the field of appearance’, one small part of which we might want to identify more acutely with the specialist name ‘live art’, or ‘theatre’, or ‘performance’. I am not so concerned with what we call it, just *how* we and others for whom appearance might not be quite such a human right might be able to *do* it with more ‘radical inclusivity’, if indeed ‘appearing’ is of any interest, and it is certainly not for everyone as Peggy Phelan has made clear in her work *Unmarked*.^{xvii}

Image 9: Children in a Box, Helen Levitt, New York, 1953

With Judith Butler, who since those under-theorised days with the Deep Sea Angler Fish I have now got around to reading, I would ask about the make-up, the *structuring* of this field of appearance: “Why *is* that field *regulated* in such a way that only certain ‘kinds of beings’ can appear as recognisable subjects, and others cannot? And why the compulsory demand to appear in *one way* rather than another that functions as a precondition for appearing at all.”^{xviii} It is not only that we need to live in order to act, but that we have to act, and act politically, to secure the conditions of appearance, and therefore of existence, for those otherwise inhibited, excluded and precluded *from* such appearance. So, a politics of possibility, perhaps, but also of course one of *performance*, always an ethics of performance as I have suggested in *Theatre & Everyday Life*.^{xix}

I am therefore interested in ‘actually existing’ forms and shapes of democracy now and then, and of critical cosmopolitanism now and then, but I am also interested in *the future* as a cultural fact, as the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai would put it, the capacity to aspire that Child & Co, like other Dickensian institutions that are alive and well in our world, does everything to militate against. I do not privilege nor limit these ‘futuristic capacities’ to children especially, I agree with Lee Edelman, the teasing, polemical author of *No Future* in that respect if not others. But that notwithstanding, I certainly *do* subscribe to my late colleague Jose Munoz’s attempt, against Edelman and other cynical reasoners, to articulate a more constructive account of ‘queer optimism’ and future potentiality, forging new forms of sociality and relationality. Hope, Munoz implies, is not a conservative form of complacency, but rather a way of sustaining a

spirit of ‘imaginative inquisitiveness’ that allows us to envision alternatives to the life-arresting logic of an ‘always to be contested’ presumption of the ‘right to life’ in the present.^{xx} If hope figures anything at all it surely figures some kind of future in the face of those who insist ‘no future’.

Image 10: Wayfinding, Photo: Alan Read, King’s College London, 2017

The first priority for me as a writer and researcher then, operating in the ‘post truth’ matrix others suggest is my cultural milieu, would be to establish on what grounds research might become significant for others, to what degree it might be expanded in reach and what it could mean for those previously denied it? I will privilege children amongst many other others here, not because they are ‘natural’ researchers, though my caricature of their classroom conduct above might suggest that is the case, rather that amongst all generational groupings, it is children who appear peculiarly absent from the research record as anything *but* objects of others’ attentions. Third Age research is positively blooming compared with this lacuna and it is an absence that fundamentally shapes and, I would contest, limits what might be thought of as childhood thinking and its potential reach and range. If the Latinate roots of the word research have the trace of ‘adventure’ in them, which they do, then it seems apposite to ask what difference expanding the human right to research to such constituencies might mean at this precarious historical juncture?

So, first I will critically address Arjun Appadurai’s propositions regarding ‘research as a human right’ seeking to question its parameters and refocus its objects of attention. Having attempted that I will put into practice one small example of such expansion of the research remit to explore what difference, if any, such inclusivity might make, to those who take up its challenge. (Of course this challenge is an *invitation* not a proscription, not least of all given it is made to a group of people who amongst many diversities, share the characteristics of youth that have for reasons I will explain, somewhat escaped me in their company on this particular occasion.)

The example is inevitably flawed by the vicissitudes of practice, but the example is offered by way of a corrective to something that Adele Senior’s students at Leeds Beckett University astutely commented upon as a headline critique to Appadurai’s

work.^{xxi} While Appadurai's analysis is both demanding and compelling, his conduct in this respect at least does not appear to lift the example off the page towards practicable conduct. This is particularly pertinent given that in other aspects of Appadurai's work, for instance his project on 'Cosmopolitanism from Below' and his own apparently close affiliation with the National Slum Dwellers Affiliation in Mumbai (as detailed in the same collection of writings), raises some striking questions as to why claims for the expanded collective of research should not themselves be tested in equivalent ways, but left as so many well-meaning theoretical axioms.^{xxii}

Research as a Human Right

Before we rush into expanding its reach what does research mean for Arjun Appadurai? What does research do? Research is a "specialized name for a generalized capacity to make disciplined enquiries into those things we need to know but do not know yet."^{xxiii} There is the recognition here that prior to its democratization, research is necessarily specialized, that it is a universal capacity, that it pursues its objects in a disciplined way, seeking useful or pertinent knowledge that is as yet unrealized. While none of these features might appear controversial, almost all of them have come under duress since the 2008 financial crises (the Queen famously asked economists at the London School of Economics why they had failed to see the crash coming) and the attendant anti-systemic populisms of the mid-teen 2000s.

Image 11: Alan Read introducing Her Majesty the Queen to Georgina Guy and Ioli Andreadi at King's College London on the occasion of the opening of the Inigo Rooms, East Wing Somerset House 2012.

The shorthand death-knell for 'experts' in the UK that attended the Brexit debates and their aftermath are but one obvious, parochial degree to which almost nothing in that waning shibboleth called research could be taken for granted anymore. While most are shoring up these categories of conduct in a last ditch validation of scientific veracity, this writing seeks a wholly different, and less defensive approach to a shared problem of intellectual challenge.

Where Appadurai on the one hand sees such research capacity as ‘vital for the exercise of informed citizenship’, he has, within a paragraph, limited his canvas to a portion of the world’s population who get as far as secondary education, and to the lowest rungs of post-secondary qualification, but no further.^{xxxv} While this represents a vast number of young people, around 1.5 billion according to the author, it also identifies the timidity of the academic anthropologist at work. Why not ask, seek or establish the plausible grounds for *all* to have the equal right to research, and insist that that ‘all’ not be limited by the conventional presumptions one might associate with getting started in research, conventions of reading and writing that Appadurai would tacitly seem to depend upon in his own observations of where research begins?

I am cognizant that this is a perilously ambitious and perhaps foolhardy expansion of Appadurai’s already generous limits, but performance makers and theoreticians are peculiarly prone to such utopian extensions given that what constitutes research for the field is by no means restricted to an economy of writing nor reading about evidence for ‘knowing’ that might shape more conventional, disciplinary frames of knowledge production. (See *Performance Research* issues *passim*.)^{xxxv} I am not here suggesting, as the worn joke goes, that everything is interpretable in a form of ‘modern dance’, though contemporary choreography has a remarkable record in accessing all areas of affect, intellect and engagement, as evidenced by the extraordinary, corporeal work of the late Randy Martin on the social logic of the derivative.^{xxxvi}

Image 12: Add Image here from With Children symposium, maybe from Build Your Own Keynote or other part of proceedings

Rather, as the *Playing Up* symposium and associated events at Tate Modern in London demonstrated in April 2016, followed by the *With Children* gathering at Leeds Beckett University in early 2017 further exemplified, the engagement of those young people who have little or no conventional dexterity with language, speech or writing should not for a moment limit their diverse capacities for expression, and I would insist research, before those capacities become limited in their own turn by the conventions of adult expression and decorum. In this sense, if not some others, I am in accordance with Appadurai when he opens out his rights of membership to ‘all human beings’ who are

‘in a sense researchers’ “since all human beings make decisions that require them to make systematic forays beyond their current knowledge horizons”.^{xxvii}

This cannot however in my mind make a strong enough case for inclusion in the already contestable ‘family of human rights’, which is the claim being made here, as Appadurai’s definition of research is one that collapses into the most generalized sense of knowledge possible. It simply appeals by way of definition to what those conducting the research ‘do not know’. It took the unlikely epistemologist US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld to remind us, apropos the Iraq invasion by the ‘Western Alliance’ in 2003, that for all those things we apparently somewhat naively do not know and know, there are equally those things we know we don’t know, and don’t know that we don’t know, and perhaps most worryingly don’t know that we know. States of what Georges Bataille called ‘Non-Knowledge’ are as much the realm of these researches today as any hinterland to what we know offering itself up to methodical hermeneutic occupation.^{xxviii} If Non-Knowledge is that which, as Bataille says, “results from every proposition when we are looking to go to the fundamental depths of its content”, it is equally something that those of us who experience it “makes us uneasy”.^{xxix} And it is such non-knowledge that lies, for Bataille at least, at the seat of unfathomable expressions such as laughter, and I would add performance. Amongst children some things might appear funny without cause, and can happily remain funny without cause, amongst adults it is not always a laughing matter.

By way of one small yet significant example of such non-knowledge, the tragic negligence of the plagiarized Weapons of Mass Destruction Dossier compiled by Tony Blair’s Government on the eve of the ‘second Iraq war’ of 2003, and its inevitable, catastrophic consequences, gives a measure of the stakes at play today with regards to the false claims made for the veracity of so-called ‘empirical research’. According to the Iraqi administration, around 4.5 million children have lost one or both parents during or since the invasion (almost 1 in 3) and approximately 600,000 children are living on the streets. Child labour has increased with 15% of children under the age of 14 now working. There are now between 1 and 3 million widows in Iraq, many struggling as heads of households and living in extreme poverty.^{xxx} In the 1970s, Iraq, irrespective of what other tyrannies might have been at work, was one of the best places in the Middle East and North Africa to be a child. Now it is one of the worst.

A not wholly flippant collateral observation of the plagiarised WMD Dossier is that, of course, children do not appear to know how to plagiarise, nor, evidence would suggest, are they especially interested in it as a practice, unlike politicians. They riff, adopt, play, adapt, mimic, but they rarely *replicate*. Yes, they make fine show of circling their writing arm around their work so as to ward off the unwelcome gaze of a neighbour, but we all know when we did this the gesture had little to do with the fear of copying, and more the embarrassment of the impoverishment of our own means to answer the question. After all plagiarism betrays a brutal poverty of means, amongst the exuberances of expression apparently still available to otherwise engaged children. This essential originality born of acute observation and overt and continuous quotation should alert us to interesting potentials for child research. So something more than Appadurai's 'systematic forays beyond current knowledge horizons' is welcome here. It is now for children themselves to determine the company they keep.

As someone associated with academic writing amongst other genres of theatre-writing and practice it should be recognised without delay that it is my own occasional field of 'academic pursuit' that has professionalised research to the point of exclusion of all but those equipped to meet the stringent demands of academic qualification. Indeed research has been virtually synonymous with the adult academy at least in its modern 800-year history since the European reestablishment of higher education in the form of the University in Montpellier, Oxford, Padua, Cambridge and Heidelberg. Most recently before the widely mocked 'Teaching Excellence Framework' threatened to monetise 'teaching quality' in the UK (a monetisation that in its first iteration has spectacularly failed to gain any traction whatsoever and abandoned at its first botched attempt) it was research through the Research Assessment Exercise and Research Excellence Framework that held sway over middle management's performance demands for more than two decades. If one was not researching then one was not one, less than one, expendable. Perform research or else!

Image 13: Alan Read at Frieze Art Fair Opening, Regents Park, London, 2016

The anxiety of the University as evidenced in this uncompromising management behaviour (unfortunately for us called performance-targeting) should not come as a

surprise given that the ubiquity of research as the single foundation of public attention and funds secured the very future of the University as we know it in the UK amidst draconian governmental threats to its funding. Indeed the rise of the management class within universities is exactly contemporaneous with the re-invention of research in this normative role. It is perhaps coincidental but fortunate for these cadres (not to mention the security of humanity at large) that ‘reliable knowledge’ has had something of a comeback after years of the aftertaste of postmodern relativism, and queasiness about the orthodoxy of truths. But research cannot just be anything as Appadurai cautions, it can only be plausible research for Appadurai if it emerges from ‘some reasonably clear grasp of relevant prior knowledge’.^{xxxi}

I am not sure I quite concur with this rather limited definition, given its implications for child-led research, but let us continue with Appadurai’s logic as it is a widely held nostrum of valid research that will make expanding research-reach towards children more, not less, difficult. The community that arbitrates such claims must, like peer-group REF panels, European Research Council reviewers, and tenure committees in the US, understand what is pre-existent in the corpus, and this is determined by the vocational and specialised limits of the *existing* field. Academic peer review thus serves the purpose of validation and legitimation, but simultaneously self-serves to police the already-existing borders of what might constitute either in the first place in that it, by necessity, maintains the shape of the research field within the pre-ordained limits mysteriously known to those paid to do the limiting. There are cemeteries of abandoned practices that mark the sweeping extent of such protectionism. It is unlikely that there will be any under-twenties never mind under-tens at such tables of measure. It is a mark of a particularly pervasive adult hegemony that such claims appear, initially at least, to be so hopelessly naïve, and on that measure of shock alone, it would appear that to initiate the return of children to the research table, or other more attractive working-surfaces, will require considerable precision to counter the resistances such hegemonies always bring with them in the interests of the senior status quo.

The entry of children to any such community (as anything but objects of attention in the form of research journals such as this) is likely to disrupt expectations and put into question what *competence* could possibly mean in such circumstances? This is anxiety-inducing for an academic class notoriously uneasy about what constitutes their own

competences in the first place. But as Appadurai reminds us, ‘legitimate new knowledge’ must do something quite *special*, it must ‘somehow strike its primary audience as interesting’.^{xxxii} Boring new knowledge is of course legitimate, and is serially legitimated and valorised by exactly this childless peer review process, but given there is quite enough of that already it might be timely to ask in what specific ways children might offer something that by its provocative presence becomes interesting when placed in the company of others? That is what I believe being in the company of these children, here, is what is going on in this journal that has, to date, been somewhat child-resistant in its admirable twenty-year history. Children might well be challenged by the systemacity of traditional knowledge forms and consequently be considered marginal to professional communities of criticism. They do not feature for instance amongst *Performance Research’s* own extensive editorial advisory list, as far as I can see, though they have found their way to the editorial table of this issue through the commitment of the editors.

But if Edward Said was right, in his influential 1980s essay on constituencies and communities of academic writing that such audiences are woefully limited in all but the most exceptional situations, research significance, or dare I say impact, can hardly be reduced by expanding its collective reach to those who might enliven it with their distinctive knowledges.^{xxxiii} Of course it could be levelled at those children, (though ‘they’ never asked to be there, rather I have put them there), that they are unlikely to fulfil the critical ‘replicability’ criteria of research. They *might* lack equal respect for the due reward for prior citational contexts given that they are unlikely to know much about such outdated contexts not least of all if they are not yet readers. But let’s consider that question of reading for a moment because citational contexts and replicability are obviously not the sole purview of the fluently logocentric.

Image 14: Schonell Reading Test, 1966

I was a woeful reader when I was described by others as a child. When confronted by the ‘suspiciously’ Teutonic sounding Schonell Reading Test at eleven years of age (our family had only relatively recently come off war-time ration cards so I felt at the time justified in my easy, anti-German bigotry) I struggled my way down the page, able to mimic the sounds of the words and construct them as I read, but I might as well have

been reading Goethe in the original so unaware I was about these words' uses, their contexts or anything like their meanings. When I look back at that serried text that I kept as a souvenir of shame, chanted out loud in front of a class of forty others, amongst company you could say, it spells out the sub-text of a life-lived over the subsequent 50 years, from audience via bibliography and idiosyncrasy, to somnambulism, but I did not know that then and could not get to grips with it to save my life. It went without mention at the time when a 'safe space' was the elevated place you could get your feet off the floor in 'off ground touch', that the steeply declining font size as the test intensified in difficulty was unlikely to favour a child with -9 myopia. In the blurred world that was my pre-spectacled, close to clinically blind childhood, such smudging between the strictures of text was the welcome order of the day. There was no way I was wearing light blue or light pink national health glasses despite my love for the NHS thanks to some problems I had had with my ears some years earlier (and to which I will return).

That lack of literary awareness did not appear to limit my imagination in other non-literary pursuits and it is evident that I was an obsessive researcher in the sense that I collected things with systematic, citational logic, fulfilling all the replicability rationales of those currently working at CERN. But there was something in evidence beyond verifiability which I would call here 'attachment' to research outcomes that has shaped all the research I have since conducted and which accounts for the queasy levels of commitment that some recognise in my prose and others find somewhat alarming in my apparent anecdotal naivety. In the absence of a 'complete set' of whatever it was I was collecting I would instantly be plunged into an obsessive world of pursuit of the lost evidence *at all costs*, the kind of cost, profligate expenditure, that Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share* would have argued more commonly would have been committed to the waste of warfare.^{xxxiv} Given my family and I survived off my mother's earnings alone, this could have only meant an excessive expenditure of emotions.

This object-love is inherent I would suggest to all research, if not always the most professionally plausible nor profitable research, and is an undervalued part of the researcher's motivational makeup. There are wells of such attachments in all children, just ask any UK child you find to recount for you the current virtual locations of Pikachu, Ed Sheeran's playlist, the names of their class, the characters of Harry Potter,

the types of long-blade knives available over the counter, Kim Kardashian's shoe range, Chelsea's away-form this year. It is not the paucity (or not) of the subject matter of such attachments that is the point, rather that attachment itself generates affiliation with knowledges of all kinds that should we wish to help to expand them through education would 'motor' a real 'growth economy', in every sense of those two terms.

Indeed the privileging of *past* practices in the form of historically informed citational legitimacy might be the embarrassed cover to the quietly acknowledged public loss of *virtuosi* in the present, the dexterity of children now in matters of this very kind. I wonder what priorities in the present children *themselves* might identify (beyond the flippant fascinators above) that adults would appear to have become insensitive to, irrespective of their much flaunted historical expertise and their devotion to precedents?

Image 15: Bentley Continental, Personalised Number Plate, Knightsbridge, London,
Photo Alan Read, 2017

That scandal of 'autogeddon' for instance? Young people across all cultures could hardly have been more invisible amidst the hegemony of the car-lobby if they had tried. As some of us entered the twenty-first century with the future on our minds an international, millennial, road safety campaign (by which I mean a radical and comprehensive critical address of all aspects of the petro-chemical industries under the cover of cars) could have done no worse than the wholly passive, cumulative shared-witness of auto-death of the previous half century, and could well have benefitted from the insights of those who know because the quality of the air that they breathe, to quote the Hollies lovely song, was *all* they needed (And to love you).

That song, *The Air That I Breathe*, after all starts with the explicit utopian scenario in which 'Cigarettes' have gone missing, plaintively evoking a world that would have seemed quite unfeasible at the height of the Tobaccocene. As I write these words in pre-Election 2017 the current Conservative government in the UK is replicating previous government's insouciance to the evidence of the dangers of tobacco in the 1950s and 1960s, by having to be dragged through the High Court to release their Air Pollution Report by order of Mr Justice Garnham.^{xxxv} Without a hint of irony James

Eadie QC for the government had argued that releasing the report prior to the Election would “drop all the issues of controversy into the election – like dropping a controversial bomb”.^{xxxvi} A fuel-filled bomb branded BP, Shell, Exxon, has already been dropped and its collateral damage is widespread. Of the 40,000 premature deaths a year caused by air pollution in the UK there can be little surprise, given what has already been said about the victims of autogeddon, that children are disproportionately effected in a pandemic of Asthma.

Image 16: Girl Under Car, Helen Levitt, New York, 1976

Courtesy Laurence Miller Gallery, New York

In seeking those investments in research children might initiate amidst a serious adult absence of interest, while we are talking about a child-led corrective to adult dereliction, we might also pause to consider the serial inadequacy of the UK legal system in other glaring respects, where ‘no respect’ has been paid to the claims of children. Successive Government agencies’ failure to come to terms with the systematic child abuse scandal of decades’ duration in the UK, from Rotherham to Plymouth, from Rochdale to Oxford, with repeated attempts to launch an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse without any sense of anything but *historical* abuse at the heart of the matter is a particularly egregious example. *Future* abuse and those under imminent threat are supposedly the object of such enquiries, ‘it should never happen again’, but future abusees are never invited to participate because they are children, to be seen and abused, but not heard. In other words, in one respect or another without respect, abused again. Nothing written here will change this systematic abuse, but asking questions about who is allowed to do research does set the scene for this glaring lack to be addressed in the first place. The existence of this journal edition, might in twenty years time, be recognised as the serious start of just this debate in the cultural sphere (if not change, given the ever widening gulf between such pretty participations and rude politics).

Seen and Not Heard

I was invited by the editors of this journal to give a Keynote to the *With Children* conference in Leeds in early 2017 that would be attended by children as well as some

other people who would be older than them. Initially I thought I would say some of the things I have written down here. I was happy to participate but had a problem. I had a ringing in my ears that was making concentration difficult and I was not sure I could write the **Keynote**, nor indeed deliver it, nor indeed hear any questions if I did deliver it and anyone, of whatever age, had some valid questions about it. I was in unknown oral and aural territory. I had experienced ringing in my ears before so I was not unduly worried, but this was different by a factor of ten.

My earliest memory at four years old was being carried into Rochford Hospital in Essex by my mother with a vertigo-inducing pain that I thought was in the middle of my head but was in fact diagnosed as mastoiditis and labyrinthitis and surgically treated with the insertion of grommets in my ears. After a week away from home, the first time I had ever left home, I was discharged with artificial bones in my ears and a year-long schedule of consultation appointments. On that first night back at home I marveled at the gas-poker that roared into life and lit the coal-fire in the warmth of which I assembled some things that I had decided to collect. I had not needed to collect anything a week before, but now I needed to, and I did it fastidiously from here on in. A blank space in an album, an empty frame in a chart, a missed issue in a run of issues, would induce the vertiginous sickness that had otherwise now left me.

Image 17 and Image 18: *Kissing the Shotgun Goodnight*, Oval House, London, October 6th 2016, Christopher Brett Bailey. Photo, Alan Read.

The ringing came back with a vengeance fifty-five years later on Thursday 6th October 2016. I was in the audience of the first night of Christopher Brett Bailey's *Kissing the Shotgun Goodnight* at the Oval House in London, accompanying a group of students who were anticipating work by the celebrated auteur of *This is How We Die*, at an event that made quite explicit the intended extreme amplification levels of the imminent show with a helpful graph indicating the contours of sound we would experience with or without the orange ear plugs provided by the venue. I enthusiastically wore the ear-protection (from well before it began) having previously experienced Scott Gibbons' compositional work with Romeo Castellucci and Societas Raffaello Sanzio over a number of years, with on one occasion an admirably noisy, stage-filling volcano that occupied the second half of a work called *The Four Seasons*

Restaurant at the Odeon Atelier in Paris, for no more discernable reason than if one can work out how to make a theatrical volcano that good, it was worth showing it to those who had come along. It was a volcano of ferocity and violence that Donald Barthelme would have admired having made auditioning for the role of a volcano the centerpiece of his lovely short story on the infinite potential of the theatrical imagination.^{xxxvii} Romeo Castellucci did not appear to be quite sure what he was doing on that occasion having replaced the intended theatrical experience, which had had something to do with the title, late in the day, with something that bore no apparent relation to the title.

On this very different occasion at the Oval House volume and volume alone, appeared to be covering up for something that seemed to have gone missing from Chris Brett Bailey's commonly extraordinary theatrical practice. Searing guitars filled the hour without apparent sense nor reason at the end of which there was no reason, nor sense of hearing as I had previously experienced it left in me. It was not that thrash metal was new to me, as a guitarist reared in Essex at the time of the great diagonalist Wilko Johnson and his rhythm and blues band Dr Feelgood, that was unlikely. But in this theatrical setting, imprisoned by the conformity of rowed seating on a sharp rake, there was really nowhere to turn but to leave to escape the noise, and that, irrespective of the potential threat to one's well being, is a difficult call embedded in an aisle-less world when one is responsible for others with less agency who are only present because of you, those with the name students. Their hearing was not effected. Nor was the hearing of the author of *The Author*, Tim Crouch who sitting just in front of me was as close to the speakers as I was but appeared to hear my comments in the foyer, after the wall of sound was over, perfectly well. I could not help notice that as he replied in what I knew from previous conversations to be a confident and articulate voice, with that ubiquitous smile, all I could hear from him was a wholly unfamiliar spectrum of high whistles and sea-like surges that I thought I had left behind when I rode my BSA motorbike away from the estuary in the Essex Delta at the end of that thing called childhood. I felt I was being returned to the company of those I once was.

Some three months later there had been no improvement in my hearing and I knew why. I had been examined by an audio consultant, Dr Harriri, who drew this image of my hearing-loss:

Image 19: Hearing Test, December 2016 (Image to be supplied)

The graph did not capture the ringing in my ears which, triggered by the theatrical occasion, had brought about the condition that audio specialists most fear because there is absolutely nothing they can do about it, Tinnitus. I knew about Tinnitus because one of my favourite performers, Richard Lowden of Forced Entertainment had once shared with me that he had it as a consequence of a theatrical act that had gone wrong, and the singer-songwriter Ryan Adams, whose work I long-liked, had toured incessantly for years by way of ameliorating the constant sounds in his head. On the day I wrote these words the inquest into the death of the *Inspiral Carpets*' drummer Craig Gill is reported. He apparently took his own life after suffering the debilitating side effects of 20 years of tinnitus. When Bella Bathurst recently researched her seminal work, *Sound: Stories of Hearing Lost and Found*, she tried to interview rock musicians about tinnitus but none would speak to her despite its prevalence in the profession. 'Deafness is too aging' she concludes.^{xxxviii}

Image 20: Votive Offering to Hearing, a gift from Despina Panagiotopoulou to Alan Read, 2017

By acknowledging my own degree of deafness, again, quite different to others', I was not disaffiliating from the company of Child & Co in an apparent process of ageing, but rather finding myself back in that company again, in the world of sonic sensation familiar from my own childhood, indeed synonymous now I listen to it, continuous, unremitting and remarkable if one has the courage, or is foolhardy enough to admit its comings and goings, day and night.

Image 21: Alan Read with Gibson Mk 35, Seattle, 1979

Having not picked up my guitar for 30 years I responded as some tinnitus sufferers do, by seeking to replace the rushing and whistling with something of my own invention. So, when I received the invitation to present a Keynote at the forthcoming event *With Children*, I asked myself what possible relevance a Keynote might have for those present between 3 months and eighty years old and what possible relevance it could

have for me now I could not hear quite as I once could while hearing something quite different to what I just did. My failure of nerve prompted me to step back from the presumption of academic presentation and rather outsource the Keynote to those present willing to work for the UK minimum wage for the under-eighteens, seeking two-and-a-half hours research for a fee of £10.00. Given the Keynote fee that the University had generously offered me was £200.00, I worked on the basis that I could afford to outsource nineteen such contracts at a cost of £190.00 retaining £10.00 for myself to do something I had never done before, to be paid to perform with my guitar and to sing a song to those present by way of concluding the presentation, which was in fact a process of distribution and contractual arrangements with those present. The time it has taken for you to read this article, if in the unlikely event you have read it without break, is more or less the time it took to set up the circumstances for something I called: *Build Your Own Keynote*.

Image 22: Conference Image from Build Your Own Keynote Session

This was what I said to the conference by way of conclusion, in a tone whose problematic condescension is a measure of my own obvious insecurity at the vast range of ages around me and amongst me in the audience. This insecurity was obvious not least of all to the youngest there present whose radar for such embarrassments can be acute. One of those in attendance, a young person who I did not know but guessed was the son of Gary Winters, who I knew from the performance duo Lone Twin, sensing the discomfiture on my part took it upon himself without prompt to act as my roadie and keynote steer.

Image 23: Leilani and Cottle

I was also able to build on an electric atmosphere created by two remarkable young scholars Leilani Storm Cottle and Avaiyia Rea Cottle who had preceded my keynote with an exceptional meditation on 'Racism and Home Schooling', delivered without apparent discomfort of any kind, perhaps because unlike me they knew what they were talking about.

With their support I began.

I want to pay you to do some *research* for me. Not right now, but during today (as you listen and participate in everything that is going on) and then in the coming days if you are still interested. You only have to do it as long as you think the money you get covers your labour, your effort. *You* decide how much research I get for £10.00, it's up to you. Then I want you to send that research to me so I can use it in my writing, and in giving a Keynote at some later date. You will see from the contract you will get to sign in return for the money, that you too can use your research in your own Keynote. So, after today I will have a better Keynote than I could have done on my own this morning. And you will have a Keynote that you would not otherwise have had if you had just gone somewhere else today. And, you will have some money.

So, we will share what is called the copyright. What I am doing is simply sharing out, redistributing this university's funds back towards you if you want to take up this offer. Why would I not keep the money for myself? What this money represents is by any reasonable standard a *surplus* to my needs, it is more than I need. And a surplus to need could be used in all kinds of interesting ways. Simply by sharing it more widely it will give certain kinds of freedom to those who earn it, to buy something you need or would like, but more significantly for me here, it represents part of a contract that will allow me to find out things I could not possibly otherwise know. I could find out from your research what you are interested in, angry about and pleased about. The adult's imagination of a child's imagination is a very beautiful and dangerous thing. I can imagine all I want about people here younger than me, and you all are, younger than me, as I am ancient, but this imagining is all a fantasy until backed up or challenged by your own research.

OK, so I don't need *all* the £200.00, but I hope you will agree that I can keep £10.00 for the effort I have put in so far warming us up, and for one more thing, which is far more difficult for me, and I think well worth £10.00. For £10.00 I would like to do something I have never done before. To sing a song in public, for money, playing my guitar. Yes, at the same time. When I say in public, I mean to you. I wouldn't dare play to the real public outside, yet, as they would kill me, or worse, ignore me. This *is* Leeds and I'm just an Essex boy. I have never been paid before to play my guitar in public,

because I cannot really *play* the guitar (I had my first lesson last Tuesday with a guitar teacher called Lewis who lives near me in London).

Image 24: Alan Read with Gibson Mk 35, 1975, Seattle, 1979

I *used* to play my guitar quite a lot, but never had any lessons on the guitar. Here I am playing it less well than I could but enjoying myself in 1979 instead of doing the research I should have been doing on my doctorate. This is in Seattle in America when I was young and had hair. But then, soon after this episode, many years ago in 1981, that is 35 years ago, I completely gave up playing the guitar, and did not even get this guitar *out* of its case again until last Tuesday when I went round to see Lewis, the guitar teacher. When I opened the case it was covered with dust and Lewis said I had to pay him £50 for the lesson not £40, because he would need a cleaner to clean his carpet, which I ruined with my 35 years of dirt that came off this old guitar case. That's why I want to keep £10 from the fee today, because I needed it for the extra money I had to pay for my lesson last week.^{xxxix}

Image 25: Guitar Lesson Guitar Solo, *The Times They are a'Changin'*, Bob Dylan

So, Lewis charges £40 for an *hour's* lesson with a clean guitarist, whereas for 30 minutes I am, we are, being paid £200 for this Keynote. So, Keynotes would seem to be worth more than 10 times as much as a guitar lesson from Lewis. I am not sure that is quite right given what a magic teacher Lewis is (wait and see the evidence in a while), but when you think about it a bit more and you realise that the Keynote is worth *20 times* more than a hospital porter who looks after patients who are sick and dying. The name for that is 'the stupid economy', not the economy, stupid.

Anyway, back to Lewis and the guitar lesson. You could say it was 35 years of dirt rather than 35 years of hurt. There *was no hurt* because the reason I had not played my guitar was because I had so many other things to do, far-fetched as it seems now, including Keynotes like this. And at a certain point in life when you realise you do something better than something else, that 'something else', guitar playing in my case, just slips away. You should think very carefully when something you once really enjoyed is no

longer happening in your life, just to check that you have not forgotten the pleasure that thing brings. What have you replaced it with? Keynotes? Think again.

Image 26: Build Your Own Keynote Contracts, 2017 (reproduce top page from attached as PDF)

There are five envelopes on the table behind me with five contracts in each of them, with £10.00 from my fee attached to each contract. After this session, during the break, or later, as the day goes on, you can come and take one of the contracts and, if you agree with it and think you can fulfill it, sign it and leave it in the envelope for me to take away later. If you sign a contract you can take the £10.00 attached to the contract for the work you are agreeing to do. The offer will close at 6.00pm this evening. Any unclaimed money will be used to produce images for any publication that comes out of our collective work.

These are the five things you are invited to work on with me:

In Envelope 1. I will pay £10.00 for anyone who can help me with some research for a keynote that tells me something about looking after the planet, living with other animals and plants, and not spoiling our world.

In Envelope 2. I will pay £10.00 for anyone who can help me with research for a keynote about what difference theatre or art could make, what contribution writers could make when it comes to protest about something you don't like. How can doing things with words and pictures change anything?

In Envelope 3. I will pay £10.00 for anyone who can help me with research for a keynote about what politicians should do to help bring about justice for as many as possible. What kinds of politicians do you want?

In Envelope 4. I will pay £10.00 for anyone who can help me with research for a keynote about what parents should do to be better parents? To listen better, yes. To understand better what it is like to be younger than them today. But what other things would improve your parents?

From Envelope 5. I will pay myself £10.00 to think about all four of these things, and to sing a song, right now, written by Bob Dylan that might act as a Keynote, a note that expresses those four things that might help us improve the world we live in: the planet, art, politics and parents (at which point some of those over a certain age in the room will know which song I am going to sing). If that is the kind of research you like to do, practice based research, then that's your envelope.

And, if you can bear listening, you will notice my Keynote song will be about *patience*, about taking our time and not worrying about being first at everything. So, you do not have to rush your research after today, just send a précis of to me when you can, when the time is right. My address is on the contract sheet that you have signed. Patience is the most important thing we can work at being better at, and is now the thing, according to a man called Peter Sloterdijk, that divides our world: the patient and the impatient. You will need to be patient to do your research, as real research always requires patience, above all else. Be patient with me now and help me out, the words are up there if you want to sing along for fun, for the love of it, or, if you are like me, now, making some sound reassures you, or reminds you, of how to get back to where you once belonged, so that you can head off now to somewhere else you want to go.

Image 27: Alan Read, With Children, Leeds, 2017, The Times They are A'Changin

Come gather around people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone
And if your breath to you is worth saving
Then you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changing

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen

And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no telling who that it's naming
For the loser now will be later to win
Cause the times they are a-changing

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's the battle outside raging
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changing

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
Cause the times they are a-changing

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slowest now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past

The order is rapidly fading
And the first one now will later be last
Cause the times they are a-changing

Bob Dylan

The Times They Are A-Changin' lyrics © Bob Dylan Music Co.

Image 28: Build Your Own Keynote Completion Certificates, 2017

Post-Script

And, despite the rendition, which was not great, some of those contracted to do so delivered what they signed up for and sent me a précis of the research they had done on my behalf. Each signatory who did so, who was under twelve years of age, received a certificate, while one signatory, Neal Anderson, sixteen years of age, received this image:

Image 29: Atelier Populaire, Mai '68 amidst *New Spirit of Capitalism* and other books, Alan Read

It showed the Mai '68 postcard Neal had sent me detailing his research, alongside books whose company I thought it would enjoy, including the reading I happened to be doing at the time from *The New Spirit of Capitalism* by Boltanski and Chiapello. I had used Neal's image as my bookmark as I worked through that book's substantial length. But by the time I had reached the much less convincing part of the book on 'Artistic Critique' I was beginning to lose interest in the writing and taking more interest in the bookmark which was just so beautiful.

Image 30: Atelier Populaire, Mai '68, Neal Anderson, Photograph: Lena Simic

According to the authors the 'Artistic Critique', the demand for freedom, autonomy and authenticity, had been handed on from artists to students in May 1968 in Paris, but then coopted by 'creatives' at the top of the 'socio cultural hierarchy'. The problem is, as Maurizio Lazzarato has convincingly demonstrated deploying sociologically precise

data, the artistic critique as written up by Boltanski and Chiapello was largely a fantasy of their own making.^{xi}

Image 31: Cildo Meireles, *Insertions into Ideological Circuits 2, Banknote Project*, 1970, Tate Modern

I inadvertently left the postcard/bookmark in that chapter when I committed the book to the book-drop at the Senate House Library in London some weeks later. I would like to think it was the subliminal urge to share that prompted me, but it wasn't, it was sheer neglect, as I had felt deeply attached to that image and would not have given it away for the world. I am left to imagine that the image now circulates within that copy of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, passed from student to student, offering up Neal Anderson's political critique just at the point in the book when new generations of readers might also be questioning Boltanski and Chiapello's logic. There are precedents of course, historians will claim that Cildo Meireles' 'Insertions into Ideological Circuits' have already been there and done that. But that would, like other adulteries, rather miss the point. Just look what those readers have in their hands! They are now in a company of their own making.

Image 32: Reverse side of Atelier Populaire, Mai '68, Neal Anderson, Photograph: Lena Simic

Build Your Own Keynote

2 Artists' Pages to include amongst others the work of:

Elisabeth (Anna Mastrokalou)

Minerva Fletcher-Watson

Hedda Fletcher-Watson

Lili Osborne

Neal Anderson

ⁱ Adam Phillips, 'Childhood Again', in *New Formations*, ed. Christine Clegg et al., p. 42, Winter 2001, pp.13-17.

ⁱⁱ See George Monbiot, "A million road deaths every year?", *The Guardian* newspaper, London edition, Tuesday May 15th, 2007, p. 25 main section.

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.* p. 25.

^{iv} Figures from Monbiot's article, which I have updated, might be treated with caution but cannot be discounted.

^v See Lee Edelman, *No Future*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

^{vi} Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labour of the Negative*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999.

^{vii} See *Theatre & Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.

^{viii} See *Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement: The Last Human Venue*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008, especially chapters 'Stage Play', 'Ring Side' and 'Infant Enthusiasm'.

^{ix} Dave Hickey, *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy*. Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1997, p. 94.

^x Quoted in Mark Wigley *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995, p. xvi.

^{xi} Adolf Portmann, *Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of Appearance in Animals*, trans. Hella Czech. London: Faber and Faber, 1949, p. 25.

^{xii} See the discussion of Adolf Portmann in *Theatre, Intimacy & Engagement: The Last Human Venue*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008, pp. 105-111.

^{xiii} Having been thinking about children and financialisation I was interested to come across Sibylle Peters' work on associated themes with Die Kinderbank Hamburg. See *Youth Theatre Journal*, Vol. 27, 2013, Issue 2, p. 100.

^{xiv} Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, accessible at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/98/old/2city12p.pdf> pp.46-47. Accessed on May 1st 2017.

^{xv} 'Bodies and Perceptions' was the title of a panel which I chaired with Harold Offeh and Evan Ifekoya at Tate Modern as part of Sibylle Peters and the Live Art Development Agency event, *Playing Up*, Starr Auditorium, Tate Modern, April 4th 2016.

^{xvi} *A Tale of Two Cities*, op cit, p. 47.

^{xvii} Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked*. London: Routledge, 1993.

^{xviii} Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015, p. 35.

^{xix} *Theatre & Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.

^{xx} José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

^{xxi} I am grateful to Adele Senior for sharing her classroom practice with me, and for her curatorial courage in coordinating with Gary Anderson, *With Children: The Child as Collaborator and Performer*, a symposium at Leeds Beckett University (28th January 2017) that unlike most child-related events walked the walk amongst its chosen subjects who thanks to them, and quite rightly 'no thanks to them', did not remain objects.

^{xxii} For Arjun Appaduarai on Cosmopolitanism from Below see *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 197-214.

^{xxiii} 'Research as a Human Right', in *The Future as Cultural Fact*, ibid. p. 270.

^{xxiv} Ibid. p. 269.

^{xxv} I was present at the founding meeting of the editorial committee for *Performance Research* in the mid 1990s, which happened to take place at my office at the Institute of

Contemporary Arts in London. While the journal itself has been radically inclusive from its inception my only recollection of the meeting itself was being briefed to guard the door against the entry of a rogue editor who was being excluded from the collective. This dystopian scenario is perhaps just the required ‘other’ for utopias such as the journal itself to get underway. See Jill Dolan in *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

^{xxxv} Amongst seminal works by Randy Martin *Knowledge Ltd* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015) and *The Financialisation of Daily Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002) are indispensable reading.

^{xxxvi} ‘Research as a Human Right’, op cit., p. 269

^{xxxvii} Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Non-Knowledge*. Trans. Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

^{xxxviii} Ibid. p. 112.

^{xxxix} For more information and statistics: <http://childvictimsofwar.org.uk/get-informed/iraq/> accessed 1st May 2017.

^{xl} ‘Research as a Human Right’, op cit, p 272.

^{xli} Ibid. p. 272

^{xlii} See Edward Said, ‘Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community’. *Critical Inquiry*, 9, (1), 1982, pp. 1-26, and available online at <https://philpapers.org/rec/SAIOAC> accessed 1st May 2017.

^{xliii} Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, xxx

^{xliiii} See ‘Air Pollution Plan Cannot be Delayed’, *The Guardian*, Thursday 27th April, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/27/air-pollution-plan-election-campaign-bomb-court-government>

accessed on 8th May 2017.

^{xlv} Ibid.

^{xlv} Donald Barthelme, *Forty Stories*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.

^{xlv} See Bella Bathurst. *Sound: Stories of Hearing Lost and Found*. London: Profile Books, 2017.

^{xlv} This was the one piece of fake news I had promised myself, to measure the degree of veracity in the remainder that was ‘not fake news’, which is obvious to anyone who studies guitar with Lewis who is not remotely concerned about students messing up his recording studio with their dust or their hopeless F Major chords.

^{xl} See Maurizio Lazzarato, 'The Misfortunes of the 'Artistic Critique' and of 'Cultural Employment', <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/lazzarato/en> accessed on May 1st 2017.